

FRIDAY

*"BECAUSE THEY DON'T KNOW
YOUR LORD"*

SCRIPTURE: Philippians 1:3-11

An engineer who had spent several months in a foreign country brought an orphan boy home with him. The boy was wild, furtive, spoke only a few words of English and seemed to trust no one.

The man's son who was of the same age, found it difficult to watch his parents' leniency toward his adopted brother's behavior, his stealing and tantrums, while they continued to expect obedience — and even understanding from him.

Finally his father explained, "Son, as time goes on and as your brother understands more, more will be required of him. But first he must learn to trust us and our love for him. Then in time as he learns to love us, and to feel as you feel toward us, all this will change."

"He won't steal my allowance — or hide my catcher's mitt?"

"Would you do that to someone now in our home?" his father asked.

"No, because it would hurt you —" Then the boy smiled. "I see," he said. "I guess I can wait."

And we, too, must learn to wait — as those new in the faith learn to respond through their love for Christ. Things never change overnight. Habits of a lifetime take time to alter. It is we who must learn patience, understanding and above all, love — since criticism without love becomes, not a bridge, but a wall of brass.

Prayer: Lord, help me to see people as you see them — at their particular area of development, at their progress in their journey to you. Give me an overwhelming love for them. AMEN

SATURDAY

*"DO IT WHEN HE ASKS THE
FIRST TIME"*

SCRIPTURE:

Ephesians 5:15, 16;
Ecclesiastes 11:1-12:7

"An act of kindness which is
a gracious attention this week,
Becomes an overdue debt the next,
and is presented with sad apology
instead of received with glad surprise.
The wounded tenderness to which
we spoke not
the timely and soothing word,
Passes into permanent soreness
Instead of healing into grateful love
Each present conviction,
Each secret suggestion of duty
Constitutes a call of God
Which can never be slighted
Without its total departure
or its fainter return.
Our opportunities come but once.
They are sufficient
but not redundant.
We have enough time for the longest duty,
But not for the shortest sin."

Martineau

Prayer: Lord, how easy it is for me to put things off — especially those things which come so quietly, so gently from you. Lord, teach me to respond most quickly to your word, and to wait for it with eagerness — for it is through this that I serve your will best. Father, as the days go by may my regrets for things I have not done become less, and my joy in having done them for you greater AMEN.

MONDAY, JULY 29, 2024

"NOT FOR US TO COMMAND"

SCRIPTURE:

I Corinthians 12:4-11;
Colossians 3:12-15

We can accept differences between ourselves and unbelievers, but isn't it hard to accept differences among ourselves and other Christians? Each one is sure he is 'right under God,' and strives to bring others to think as he thinks. Only Christ has authority to ordain the spirit to its task.

Therefore, while we may be free to speak of our guilt, we must not assume that it is every man's guilt . . . while we may singlemindedly seek one particular goal, we must not feel it is God's goal for every man. While we feel an urge in one direction, it is wrong for us to demand that all others suddenly turn and follow our way. The hostile judgment which one Christian may levy on another is not up-building: it is arrogance, pride and blindness — from whatever level it comes or for whatever reason.

Therefore, it is imperative that we Christians look to our own concerns under God. That we state them and share our calling to them is a necessary thing; we need prayer and support from other Christians. But we must grant others the same spiritual freedom we demand for ourselves . . . we must withhold judgment while at the same time remaining true to Christ's specific will for us.

Prayer: Lord, in our zeal so often we try to interpret your will for others. May we never stand in the shadow of your will for we know that you work in many ways your wonders to perform. Thank you, Lord. AMEN

TUESDAY

“GOD WILL FULFILL IT!”

SCRIPTURE:

(The Promise: II Samuel 7:8-17)

The Promise kept: II Samuel 23:1-14)

Supplementary Reading II Samuel Chapter 24

It is fascinating to see how God works out his promises. Here we see David, whom God has chosen to be king after Saul, driven to the hills — an exile, hunted and running for his life. How easy it would have been to have doubted God’s promise, to have determined to kill Saul himself — in order to make God’s promise come true.

Yet not once did David doubt God or turn from him — and not once did David give way to resentment or hatred toward Saul, nor did he lift his hand against the man who sought his death. He left it in God’s hand: the vengeance, the timing, and the fruition of the promise.

And God was faithful. While Saul raged, God quietly built an army and while he built the army, he forged the man who would one day rule Israel at the head of this army — David, God’s beloved, for Scripture says David was a man after God’s heart.

No wonder. Such faith and sweetness is rare in any man of strength, and in that day before Christ, even more unique.

Are you this trusting? Are you letting God work out his promise to you? Are you leaving the judgment or vengeance to him? Or is resentment . . . bitterness . . . anger blocking his way?

Prayer: Lord, David’s whole life was marked with love. Help me to be the kind of person who can wait without doubting, and serve you without immediate reward. Give me a faith like David’s which commits all to you. AMEN

WEDNESDAY

“A LITTLE BIT OF AWE IS GOOD”

SCRIPTURE:

I Chronicles 13:1-14;

Acts 5:1-15

Probably carelessly and without even remembering the sacredness of the ark he was transporting, Uzzah steadied the toppling Holy of Holies — and died. We identify with David completely here: it does seem a harsh, unmerciful sentence. After all, Uzzah was only trying to save the ark.

Or was there something in his attitude which God was condemning? Only God (and perhaps the men with whom Uzzah had served) knew whether or not Uzzah revered God and the things of the temple. His carelessness could have been indicative of his entire attitude toward God.

Perhaps David, knowing his own inner heart, realized he, too, had been guilty of too much familiarity toward God and so realized as Uzzah died, he was inwardly guilty also.

Often as we see another come under judgment for disobedience, we realize how easily we could be called to judgment.

While God wants us to come to him as Father, there must always be with us the realization of who he is not only as Father, Counselor, and Guide but as Almighty God in whose hands a universe rests. This is not that we fear him for fear’s sake, but a constant reminder that as such a God — all things are possible to him.

You love him. Do you still reverence him?

Prayer: O God, may familiarity with you never breed contempt for your holy laws or keep me from worshipping you as God. Help me to honor you more as my love for you grows. AMEN

THURSDAY

“TO SEE WITHOUT JUDGMENT”

SCRIPTURE:

John 3:16-19;

John 8:7-11

It takes great humility to recognize sin without judging the person committing that sin. In fact it takes a first-hand experience with sin ourselves to understand that sin is far more natural to us than sinlessness.

Only those who have had the humility to recognize sin in their lives and to have it forgiven by Christ — can look with love and mercy upon a person who is currently out of God’s will for him.

Yet this lack of judgment does not mean lack of perception or the inability to recognize sin. God fully intends that we should have insight or wisdom in recognizing it: “Be wise as serpents —” Christ said, “harmless as doves.” We need to be able to observe sin and know it.

But judgment is another thing, for judgment assesses wrong and levies a punishment. Judgment belongs to God, for it demands a knowledge of the whole situation, and only God has access to this deep, complex insight.

So when you see another person at fault, say, “Why?” Then — “How would I react in his place?” And finally — “What would this man be like if God touched him?” Your judgment will vanish and love will be power in your heart. Then you can reach out to say, “Come — see The Man, Christ Who comes to bring you a new life!”

Prayer: O Lord, it is so easy to forget my own imperfections when I look at another’s sin. Give me the understanding heart which sees without judgment and desires only to heal. AMEN